

# Knox Regional Communications Center Executive Board

Wednesday  
October 18, 2017  
3:00 p.m.

A meeting of the Executive Board of the Knox Regional Communications Center took place on **Wednesday, October 18, 2017 at 3:00 p.m.** in the Knox County Emergency Management Agency Office.

**Executive Board members in attendance:** Camden Fire Chief Chris Farley; Adam Miceli, Rockland Fire/EMS; Craig Cooley, Rockport Police Department; Rockland PD Deputy Chief Chris Young; Jesse Thompson, Union EMS; and Knox County EMA Director Ray Sisk. **Members absent:** *Ruston Barnard, Rockland Fire/EMS.*

**Others in attendance:** County Administrator Andrew Hart, Knox Regional Communications Director Linwood Lothrop, Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, and Temporary Deputy Communications Director Wally Tower.

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|-------------|-------------|---|
| <b>I.</b>   | <b>3:00</b> | <b>Meeting Called To Order</b>                            |
| <b>II.</b>  | <b>3:01</b> | <b>Discussion Items:</b>                                  |
|             |             | 1. Report from Wally Tower                                |
|             |             | 2. 2018 KRCC Budget Draft                                 |
|             |             | a) Deputy Communications Director                         |
|             |             | b) Forming a Committee to Review Operations               |
|             |             | 3. Election of Representatives in the Users Group meeting |
| <b>III.</b> |             | <b>Other Business</b>                                     |
| <b>IV.</b>  |             | <b>Adjourn</b>  |

## **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Chris Farley at 3:03 p.m.

## **II. Discussion Items**

### **1. Report from Wally Tower.**

Temporary Deputy Communications Director Wally Tower stated that he had failed in the mission to go in and take care of employees and the issues. He said that he discovered that the issues with the employees are a symptom of a much larger problem. He did a comprehensive review of what's going on and ran through an overview of the issues:

1. There is a severe lack of leadership and support for the staff. Part of that is Director Lothrop's level of training and the other part is circumstances beyond his control – technology, which has grown leaps and bounds in the last 20 years and is changing at a faster rate than ever before. The department is going to need some restructuring so that there is someone taking care of day to day operations and staff, and someone else in charge of technology. Some of what Director Lothrop does could be transferred to other staff. A lot if it might be better suited to an administrative assistant or another dispatcher.
2. Training – currently non-existent for supervisors. Stephanie Gibbs has been a supervisor for years now and has never been to any supervisor training. She is now enrolled in one but it doesn't happen until March of 2018. If someone else is promoted to supervisor before then, then that person will take the training too. At that point in time only then can the supervisors be held accountable. The

second supervisor position has been a revolving door. Stephanie is burnt out and the employees don't have any respect for her because they know she has effectively given up.

3. The employees need support but Stephanie doesn't have time and Director Lothrop is too busy. The employees don't have an avenue to vent to a supervisor and be heard. They need to know the management cares but Director Lothrop is too busy because he's off doing the technology thing, which he needs to do, but it means that he's not there. Stephanie is in way over her head because she doesn't have the supervisor training and there's so much going on with her.
4. Morale is low or non-existent. They don't have any guidance so they end up talking amongst themselves, which leads to speculation and the rumor mill. They need to be included and kept informed. The department needs to be a team.
5. Severe staffing issues – the dispatch center was created in 1999 and integrated the individual agencies. The dispatchers at the time also did a lot of secretarial work. There were 22 dispatchers total in the whole of Knox County (all of the agencies combined) handling 27,000 calls for service. The KRCC currently has 10 dispatchers and 1 supervisor but handling 46,400 calls for service. He said he tried talking to a dispatcher yesterday and just needed two minutes of the dispatcher's time, but they are so swamped he wasn't able to talk to them. It's not so bad at night but from 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. they're overwhelmed. The original plan when the Center was set up was to have three dispatchers on at all times, but most of the time there is only two because of the lack of staff. There are other duties that they have that people don't know about. They have to do Quality Assurance which involves listening to and critiquing every fire and EMS call, from start to finish, and score it. 7,800 complaints. Very soon they're also going to have to do the law enforcement calls as well, which bumps it up to about 8,000. All of that could be done by an administrative assistant, who could also do the transcripts, FOA requests, etc. Dispatchers have to maintain their licensing or they can't dispatch. The amount of training requirements are huge. They also have dispatching mandates that they have to learn and comply with from individual agencies – LE, EMS and fire from the different towns/agencies each have their own protocols. The dispatchers are never going to achieve perfection when there's that many different sets of protocols. There's not really a way to fix that.
6. The perception of dispatch and what they do is commensurate with the level of training that someone on the outside has. The patrol men are calling them and chewing the dispatchers because of how they perceive what the dispatchers are supposed to do. Also have to train the dispatchers why police, etc. look at things the way that they do. Correct that when he can but there's only so much he can do.
7. The County needs to look at restructuring operations and spend time training the employees. If that is done, the symptoms of low employee morale, such as rumors and gossiping, will go away. He said that he and the county administrator need support making the changes. If the County isn't going to move forward with a deputy director then there's nothing he, or anyone else, can do.

Administrator Hart assured Sgt. Tower that he did not fail just because he didn't fix every issue that was going on in the Center. Nobody expected that all of the issues would be corrected in that short of a period of time. He said that while maybe things didn't go the way they were originally expected, the work that Sgt. Tower has done in the Center in the short time he's been there has been extremely beneficial. There have been improvements made, and every improvement is a step in the right direction. It's not a failure. Director Lothrop added that he knew the picture wasn't going to be rosy and that's why he asked Sgt. Tower to go in and assess the situation and give an honest opinion, which is exactly what he got.

There was some discussion about whether the name of the position should be changed to make it easier for the Budget Committee and others to understand the purpose for the position. Director Lothrop will continue to be the technology person while the other position would essentially be the operations

manager. The Executive Board members weren't sure that changing the name of the position would make any difference. The consensus, however, was that the Board needs to do something to ensure that there is that second management position because the department needs the help. Sgt. Tower said that he would remain where he is as long as the county administrator needed him to be.

The budget proposal for the KRCC is being reviewed by the Budget Committee and Commission on the night of October 26<sup>th</sup>. The Board members were asked to attend if they can, and speak in support of the budget.

2. 2018 KRCC Budget Draft.

- Adam Miceli motioned to approve the budget. Craig Cooley seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.

a) Deputy Communications Director  
This was discussed under agenda item #1.

b) Forming a Committee to Review Operations  
This will be discussed at a future meeting.

3. Election of Officers in the Users Group Meeting.  
This will be done at the Users Group meeting at 4 p.m.

**III. Other Business**

**IV. Adjourn**

- Jesse Thompson motioned to adjourn. Chris Young seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 4:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards  
Administrative Assistant